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Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of global development trends, issues and policies, global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies, and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of global development trends, issues and policies, global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies, and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions (E/AC.51/2000/2). The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendation.

* E/AC.51/2003/1.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of global development trends, issues and policies, global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies, and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on an in-depth evaluation.

The subprogrammes reviewed in the 2000 in-depth evaluation are responsible for the analysis of socio-economic development trends carried out within the United Nations by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions. That analysis is submitted to the intergovernmental bodies requesting it and is published in flagship reports such as the *World Economic and Social Survey* and the regional surveys.

As recommended by CPC, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions have continued to improve the quality and presentation of these reports to ensure that their main findings and policy proposals can more easily reach government officials and the specialized public. The programmes concerned have more systematically applied good practices that are increasing the dissemination of their analyses, such as the timely release of publications, more targeted distribution and special briefings to government officials and the press.

The interaction between analytical and technical cooperation activities has strengthened the analytical content of the economic and social surveys. Due to resource constraints, this interaction has been limited to the few cases where it could be built into existing projects. It is hoped that greater interaction will be facilitated by the 2003 reorganization of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is based on a model of increased reliance on the collective competencies of the Department. Additional steps to strengthen the analytical content of the surveys should include more sustained exchange of information and ideas among the Department and the regional commissions.

Most of the analysis done by the Department and the regional commissions is based on short-term outlooks or medium-term perspectives. More attention to long-term trends to facilitate the understanding of current circumstances that may have an impact on long-term development prospects would be an important contribution towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

CPC recommended in 2000 that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs take measures to review its capacity to carry out in a better manner its analysis of socio-economic development trends. The Department proceeded in early

2003 with a reorganization of its structure, which is meant, among other things, to strengthen and raise the visibility of its analysis. In this regard, it is recommended that the results of the 2003 reorganization be assessed by the Department at the end of 2005 and reported on in the context of the programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005.

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I. Introduction

1. At its fortieth session, in 2000, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of global development trends, issues and policies, global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies, and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions (E/AC.51/2000/2). In addition to endorsing the recommendations of the evaluation report, the Committee recommended that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs take measures to review its capacity to carry out in a better manner the analysis of socio-economic development trends.[1]

2. The present report contains the findings of the triennial review conducted to determine the extent to which the CPC recommendations made three years ago have been implemented. The status of implementation of the various recommendations is discussed in section II below, under four distinct headings.

3. The subprogrammes responsible for the analysis of socio-economic development trends (the subject of the evaluation) are implemented at the global level by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and at the regional level by the regional commissions. The triennial review is based on (a) the information provided by the Department and the regional commissions on progress made in implementing the CPC recommendations, a process that is monitored twice a year by the Office of Internal Oversight Services; (b) the review in early 2003 of the relevant documentation and comments submitted by the Department, the regional commissions and experts in other organizations using United Nations analyses in preparation for the triennial review; and (c) consultations with staff of the Department and of the regional commissions. A draft of the report was made available to the Department and the regional commissions for review. Their comments are identified in the present report by the use of italics.

II. Findings

A. Enhancing the content of global socio-economic analysis

Recommendation 1
Contribution of the *World Economic and Social Survey* to intergovernmental processes

(a) The *World Economic and Social Survey* should be more concise, highlight action-oriented findings and present clear policy proposals based on them. The *Survey* issued in the year 2001 should incorporate an executive summary containing the findings and policy proposals of part II of the *Survey*;

(b) In liaison with other parts of the Secretariat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should identify a wider range of government officials to whom the contents of the *Survey* would be of interest and should take the necessary steps to ensure that the *Survey*, in print or electronic version, either in its entirety or only the relevant sections, reaches them.

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 16 and corrigenda* (A/55/16 and Corr.1 and 2), chap. II, sect. C, para. 244.

4. Each year an important issue of the world economy is discussed in part II of the *World Economic and Social Survey*. Since 2001, in accordance with recommendation 1 (a), part II of the *Survey* has been introduced by an executive summary containing the main findings and policy proposals developed in the discussion that follows.

5. The Development Policy Analysis Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs introduced this improvement, among a few others made to the content and presentation of the *Survey*. These improvements are expected to facilitate the use by intergovernmental bodies of the analysis presented in the *Survey*. Although direct evidence of the use of the analysis is rarely documented (for example, there were only three direct references to the *Survey* in the general debate of the Second Committee of General Assembly in 1998, and again in 2001), in its 2000 review of the use of the *Survey*, the Office of Internal Oversight Services found that it is used by delegates to the General Assembly for reference, and CPC stressed that "the value of the *World Economic and Social Survey* as a reference tool should be preserved".[2] Also, as reported in the 2000 in-depth evaluation, the General Assembly considered that since 1998 the analysis produced by the Development Policy Analysis Division had provided constructive inputs to its work on the question of financing for development.

6. Media coverage of the *Survey*, and related publications such as the *World Economic Situation and Prospects*, which is released at the beginning of the year, provides another indirect indication of the increased dissemination, and possible greater influence, of the analysis they contain. The Department of Public Information monitoring of press coverage shows that the number of articles on these publications has increased and, more importantly, that the substantive content of the articles has improved. Also, since 2001 authors of the *Survey* have been interviewed on influential cable-television networks covering business and finance issues. Department of Public Information officers believe that one of the reasons for this improved coverage is the more focused analysis of issues and presentation of findings achieved since 1999.

7. To reach a wider range of government officials (an issue addressed in recommendation 1 (b)), the Development Policy Analysis Division began to expand its mailing list for the *Survey*, using mailing lists maintained by other relevant units in the Secretariat. Also, the Division added all central banks to the distribution list for the *Survey* (see para. 24 below). The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that recommendations 1 (a) and 1 (b) were meaningfully implemented by the Division.

8. Although recommendations 1 through 4 apply primarily to the global programme implemented by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, regional commissions considered that these recommendations provided useful criteria for asserting the value of their own activities. For example, regarding the contribution to intergovernmental processes, addressed in recommendation 1, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) stated that it was striving to make its annual *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific* more concise and to give greater emphasis in it to the analysis of alternative policy options facing ESCAP member Governments.

[2] Ibid., para. 243, recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2
Assessing long-term trends in the global economy

To facilitate intergovernmental discussion on policies conducive to long-term development, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should strengthen its analysis of long-term trends in the global economy using a variety of methodological approaches and it should further integrate this dimension into its reporting to intergovernmental bodies.

9. The Development Policy Analysis Division had been preparing economic studies mostly on the basis of short-term outlooks or medium-term perspectives, and appeared to neglect the study of long-term trends (that is, beyond a 4-year to 6-year perspective), a situation that recommendation 2 was intended to remedy. In its implementation plan for the CPC recommendations, the Division stated that, to provide more long-term perspectives, it would whenever possible draw attention to current circumstances that could have an impact on long-term development prospects. For example, the 2001 *Survey* discussed the repercussions that vulnerable groups may experience in the medium to long run when a downturn in the economy is brought about by an unexpected shock. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers recommendation 2 to be partially implemented.

10. The Millennium Development Goals invite the international community to assume a medium- to long-term perspective on economic and social development. In this context, it is important for the economic analysis of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to serve as a source for understanding long-term trends. The Department is attempting to strengthen this aspect of its economic analysis and has created, as part of its 2003 reorganization, the Development Policy and Planning Office, which is responsible, in particular, for examining long-term global development perspectives (see para. 35 (b) below).

Recommendation 3
Linkages between political and economic issues and policies

After intergovernmental agreement on a methodology for assessing the impact of sanctions on third States, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs should review the required activities and capacity needed within the Secretariat. The review should be the basis for proposals presented to the relevant intergovernmental bodies as part of the revision to the medium-term plan.

11. The involvement of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in assessing the economic impact of sanctions arose from the recognition by the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/120 B, that in the conditions of economic interdependence that existed at that time the implementation of preventive or enforcement measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations against any State continued to create special economic problems for certain other States. The preparation of the reports requested by the General Assembly on this matter has been carried out within the arrangements for interdepartmental cooperation, which were adopted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/51, utilizing existing capacity in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of Legal Affairs. Since 2000 the Secretariat has not been mandated to assume major new functions to address the issue of the impact of sanctions on third States. As a result, the review of activities

and capacity needed within the Secretariat, as envisaged in recommendation 3, has not been required. In his last report on the matter, the Secretary-General stated that the existing arrangements for interdepartmental cooperation "did not preclude further cooperation between the relevant departments, as appropriate", and that the setting in motion of functions contemplated in General Assembly resolution 50/51 "was dependent on a request either by the Security Council or by interested Member States".[3]

Recommendation 4
Analytical functions and operational activities at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

To correct the inadequate interaction between research and operational activities under subprogramme 28.7, Global development trends, issues and policies, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should plan a number of joint activities between the professional staff assigned under subprogramme 28.7 and those involved in technical assistance under subprogrammes 28.3 and 28.8. Resources permitting, appropriate activities could include joint participation in the analysis of developments in national economies and joint participation in needs assessment missions.

12. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs informed the Office of Internal Oversight Services in 2001 that the implementation of recommendation 4 would be pursued in the context of the management review of the Department's technical cooperation programme, scheduled to take place at the end of that year. In the course of that review, the evaluation of the impact of the Department's technical cooperation concluded (as did the 2000 evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services) that the technical cooperation work should be well integrated with the Department's normative work. The evaluation noted also that the Department's analytical activities, including its analysis of global economic and social trends, were designed to support the normative and policy-making functions of the Organization, but it did not provide concrete suggestions to promote adequate interaction between analytical and technical cooperation work, as advocated in recommendation 4. In 2002 the Department informed the Office of Internal Oversight Services that resource constraints, both human and financial, had not allowed such interaction to take place. *The Department stated that since then a reorganization of the Department, including the technical cooperation function, had taken place so as to enable technical cooperation work to be linked more closely to, and to draw on and enrich, the analytical work of the various divisions.*

13. Past experience at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions shows that interaction between analytical and technical cooperation activities is greatly facilitated when it can be built into existing activities. At ESCAP, for example, the Development Research and Policy Analysis Division (now the Poverty and Development Division), responsible for the preparation of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*, combines to the extent possible the various workshops and seminars on specific themes it organizes in the region with the monitoring of more general developments in the relevant national economies. This practice has strengthened the analytical content of the ESCAP *Survey*. Limitations on funds for travel are making it difficult for the

[3] A/57/165, para. 11.

Division to participate in the technical assistance needs assessment missions of other ESCAP divisions. The merger of the Development Research and Policy Analysis Division in 2003 with the operational sections dealing with rural and urban poverty reduction is expected to bring about greater synergy between research and operational activities in the field of poverty reduction, which is one of the central themes of the ESCAP *Survey*. In this way, the consideration of poverty issues is integrated with work on economic policies and prospects in order to make the analysis more useful to the policy makers of the member countries.

14. It is expected that the 2003 reorganization of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is based on a model of increased collaboration among divisions (see para. 35 below), will provide opportunities to ensure greater interaction between analytical and technical cooperation activities in the Department. *The Department stated that it had, in particular, created three substantive interdivisional task forces, in social development, sustainable development and information and communications technology. These task forces will seek to develop interdivisional technical cooperation products, drawing on the analytical strengths of the various divisions involved in these themes. Also, electronic technical cooperation, which develops learning communities among the Department's staff, advisers, national counterparts and outside experts, is increasingly used as a means to increase the integration of analytical and technical cooperation work, and to reach out beyond the Department in terms of ideas and expertise.* In that respect, progress in the implementation of recommendation 4 will need to be reviewed at a later time.

B. Exchange of information among the global and regional programmes

Recommendation 5
Exchange of information on socio-economic development issues, trends and policies in the Secretariat

Resources permitting, standard procedures should be adopted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions to enhance the exchange of information and ideas on socio-economic development issues. Appropriate procedures could include requests for inputs during the planning phase of the economic and social surveys, requests for comments on preliminary drafts and a regularly updated inventory of studies and working papers completed or in preparation in the different parts of the Secretariat. The effectiveness of such procedures should be periodically reviewed by the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs.

15. Contacts between the Development Policy Analysis Division and the regional commissions have continued, to the extent permitted by time and financial resources. Staff of the Division visited each of the regional commissions at least once in 2001. Staff of the regional commissions also participated in meetings organized by the Division on substantive issues. In the past, the biannual meetings of Project LINK, an international economic research network, have provided the most regular opportunity for exchange of information and ideas between the Division and staff of the regional commissions. However, in recent years, it has been difficult for the representatives of the regional commissions to attend all of the

Project LINK meetings, because of lack of funds. *One regional commission stated that, to enable the commissions to attend the meetings, in addition to the matter of funding, attention should be given to selecting mutually convenient dates of meetings.*

16. *The Department of Economic and Social Affairs stated that the implementation of the recommendation could be further advanced through the collaborative effort on programmatic harmonization made in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. In that effort, undertaken initially to finalize programme budget submissions for the biennium 2004-2005 for the entities members of the Committee, 10 thematic groups are engaged in examining cross-cutting substantive areas within the broad framework of poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development in the globalizing world. While the immediate focus of the exercise was to identify gaps and overlaps, it also helped promote among the participants greater awareness of each other's work and brought closer together a community of staff working in similar areas in different duty stations. Better coordination and cooperation among the entities mean improved exchange of information on socio-economic development.*

17. There has been some progress towards the adoption of procedures to promote the exchange of ideas during the planning and preparation of the economic surveys and related publications. However, a satisfactory arrangement for systematic consultations among the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions on draft chapters of their respective surveys has not been found. Authors stated to the Office of Internal Oversight Services that tight deadlines for finalizing the surveys make the practice of joint reviews difficult to maintain. *ESCAP stated that possibilities for representatives of the Department to attend the expert group meetings of the regional commissions in which the substantive chapters of the surveys are discussed, as is the case for ESCAP, and reciprocal participation of the commissions in Department meetings, should be actively investigated.* The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that greater efforts should be made by the various programmes concerned to implement recommendation 5, with advocacy from the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs.

C. Dissemination of global and regional socio-economic analysis

Recommendation 6
Informal network for a wider dissemination of the results of analytical work

The Secretariat should develop an informal network of experts to assist in disseminating United Nations economic and social analysis. Experts who contributed to the economic and social surveys or topical studies or who commented on preliminary drafts of the surveys should be requested to make brief presentations on specific findings of the surveys to national authorities and the press in their country of residence, and at professional meetings they attend.

18. The promotion of United Nations flagship reports in the economic and social sector is essentially the responsibility of one Department of Public Information information officer, usually covering multiple assignments. This stands in contrast to the case of similar flagship publications of the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which are

promoted by a team of professionals and have budgets to hire experts and consultants to promote the publications in several locations worldwide. The intent of recommendation 6 was to compensate to the extent possible for the limited means available to promote United Nations flagship reports by enlisting the good will of experts familiar with the contents of these reports.

19. The enlistment of an informal network of experts to help with the dissemination of United Nations analytical work was pursued by the various programmes in the following manner:

(a) The Department of Economic and Social Affairs asked the members of the Committee for Development Policy, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council serviced by the Development Policy Analysis Division, to contribute to the dissemination of United Nations analyses;

(b) The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has expanded the network for disseminating findings of its economic analysis and the *Economic Report on Africa*; presentations are made at its intergovernmental meetings and the meetings of the African Economic Research Consortium. ECA plans to make presentations of the findings at its subregional offices, in collaboration with national experts and policy institutions. A group of seven eminent African experts was used to review drafts of the 2002 *Economic Report on Africa*, to help assert its value and thereby enhance its dissemination;

(c) The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is exploring ways to extend its network of economists, from both governmental and academic circles, and to have the main findings of the *Economic Survey of Europe* presented by national experts in their respective countries, in particular at press conferences when a new issue of that *Survey* is released;

(d) ECLAC is taking the opportunity of using expert group meetings not only to discuss specific issues on the agenda of the meetings but also to disseminate the results of ECLAC's analytical work;

(e) Since late 1999, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) informal network of experts has been in place to assist in disseminating ESCAP economic and social analysis in 15 countries in the region. Similarly, a group of eminent persons was established in late 2001 to serve as the expert group for the preparation of the new annual *Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives* and also for the Asia-Pacific *Survey*, thereby further enhancing the informal network of national experts;

(f) For the wider dissemination of its social and economic analysis, including the analysis of issues relating to women and gender, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) encouraged its staff to publish articles in local newspapers and to use the media, particularly television. During the biennium 2002-2003, ESCWA implemented a media strategy that included the broadcast of 11 televised episodes and a gender-awareness media campaign involving 15 one-hour episodes on the 12 areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.[4]

[4] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

20. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions have made concerted efforts to implement recommendation 6. The results of their initiatives, some of them quite recent, will need to be assessed in a year or two.

Recommendation 7
Reaching the professional community

The Secretariat should endeavour to make a greater contribution to the world professional debate outside the United Nations on the issues of socio-economic development and, resources permitting, expand the good practices of a few Secretariat units, inter alia, by:

(a) Encouraging staff to participate in professional conferences and seminars and to make contributions to professional journals, with priority given to meetings and journals of interest to development economists and policy makers in governments;

(b) United Nations publications on economic and social development should be prepared using rigorous quality control arrangements; working papers, such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs discussion paper series, should be subject to a referee system similar to that used in the professional community prior to publication.

21. ECE and ECLAC continued their well-established practice of contributing to professional conferences and journals in their regions. Adjustments required in other programmes to implement recommendation 7 (a) were not always possible. The Development Policy Analysis Division reported that all of its professional staff members had participated in at least one outside conference in 2001, but that workload did not permit the allocation of as many staff-hours for such activities as might be desirable. ESCAP places priority on the contribution its staff are making to the in-house *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*, and the series entitled *Development Papers*. Whenever possible, ESCAP staff also contribute to external journals and seminars. At ECA, the Economic and Social Policy Division has instituted regular seminars and encourages its professional staff to make presentations, which could be the basis for publications in its Discussion and Working Papers after further internal peer review. ESCWA encouraged its professional staff to publish articles in local newspapers on social and economic issues and on the situation of Arab women as part of its strategy to disseminate information (see para.19 (f) above).

22. The programmes involved made an effort to improve the quality control of publications prior to publishing. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is using specific arrangements that vary with the nature of the publication. ESCWA assigned a senior staff member to address the issue of quality control of outputs, in addition to the existing mechanisms of review. At ESCAP, the referee and peer review system for publications is being systematized and strengthened. *ESCAP stated that, in view of the cost factor, external peer review will be conducted only for selected key publications, while internal peer review will be institutionalized as a precondition for the publishing of all documents.* At ECA, internal and external peer reviews of publications have been strengthened. However, the inadequacy of financial resources has had an adverse impact on the practice. For example, ECA had to suspend its annual joint publication with Oxford University, the *Journal of African Economies*. Officials in one of the programmes reviewed in the present

report misunderstood the value of using a referee system, which is a mechanism to enhance the visibility of publications in the professional community; thinking that the system was to be used mostly to control the content of publications, they did not think it was needed, as there were sufficient control mechanisms in place.

23. In the opinion of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, recommendation 7 has been implemented unevenly. The need for further efforts by the various programmes should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and in conjunction with the implementation of recommendation 6, which also relies on the contributions of experts from the professional community.

Recommendation 8
Free distribution and sales

Arrangements for the dissemination of analysis prepared for distribution in print or in electronic form should be reviewed, so that, inter alia:

(a) Mailing lists for free distribution are systematically derived from major categories of users (e.g. research departments in central banks, focal points in governments, national economic and social research institutes, professional journals);

(b) Mailing lists are updated regularly;

(c) Adequate resources are allocated to the development and maintenance of web sites to enhance their usefulness;

(d) Recurrent publications are released, with due attention to the calendar of intergovernmental meetings, at a time of the year when their findings are still relevant to the interested public;

(e) Sales strategies, including entering into contracts with local publishers, serve the primary purpose of the United Nations publications, which is to increase the dissemination of the United Nations perspective on issues of socio-economic development;

(f) Formal and informal feedback is used to review the effectiveness of these arrangements at regular intervals.

24. The good practices of mailing-list management set out in recommendations 8 (a) and 8 (b) are now more regularly applied by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions. The Department revised its mailing lists and, as part of this process, in 2001 all central banks were added to the distribution list for the *World Economic and Social Survey*. ESCAP's mailing lists for free distribution are systematically derived from major categories of users and updated annually, and at other times if necessary. ESCAP is also expanding the mailing list for the *Survey* to include ministers of finance and governors of central banks. ESCWA's general and specialized mailing lists are updated every six months, using information from the responses to questionnaires sent to end-users. ECA has developed a mailing-list database that includes various stakeholder groups. The mailing list is updated by each division, with a focal point in the central communication team facilitating the process. The ECE distribution list is periodically updated, in particular by reviewing academic journals, newspapers and business magazines to identify experts, academics and policy makers, as well as through contacts at international conferences and seminars.

25. In accordance with recommendation 8 (c), all the programmes concerned have now allocated resources, or have taken the necessary steps to do so, to ensure sound management of their web sites. In 2002, ESCAP was able to create two full-time positions to enhance the dissemination of economic and social analyses and related public information material through its web sites. ESCWA appointed an information master to review information material and place it on its web site. The material is now available in English and Arabic, and the number of visits to the site has increased significantly. ECE has an information technology post dedicated to the technical production of the Europe *Survey*, including its timely availability to Governments on the ECE web site. In April 2002 ECLAC established an Internet Development and Coordination Unit, in charge of managing the institutional web site, maintaining its technological platform and developing new Internet applications and systems. At ECA, most of the funding for web-related activities has come from extrabudgetary sources. For example, in 2002, one Government contributed more than $100,000 to enhance the French-language site. ECA expects more consolidated support for web development activities from the regular budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

26. The timeliness of the publications, an issue raised in recommendation 8 (d), has improved. The main economic survey reports prepared at the request of intergovernmental bodies are, in some cases, issued early enough to allow for discussions both within the Secretariat and with Member States before intergovernmental meetings; at ECE this is accomplished through the provision of advance-copy versions. ECE stated that in 2003, it had reinstated an item on the agenda under which the ECE secretariat presents main findings and policy conclusions, followed by a general discussion. However, the long delay between the time when the advance text is made available and the publication of the final version affects ECE's ability to make its economic analysis available to its readership in timely fashion. In this respect, the Europe *Survey* must be given higher priority in printing schedules than is presently the case. The timing of the release of publications that provide year-end assessments of developments in the global economy, and their impact and implications for the coming year, such as the *World Economic Situation and Prospects* (Department of Economic and Social Affairs and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the *Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives* (ESCAP) and the *Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean* (ECLAC), is extremely important. In 2002 and 2003 the *World Economic Situation and Prospects* was released, during the first few days of the year, an improvement over previous years. In January 2003, the Department of Public Information was able for the first time to coordinate with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD the promotion of the *World Economic Situation and Prospects*, at joint press conferences in New York and Geneva, led respectively by UNCTAD and Department officials. News agencies filed 24 stories on that publication in 2003, which compares well with the 34 stories filed by news agencies in 2002 on the World Bank *World Development Report*, which benefits from extensive worldwide promotion.

27. There have been occasional setbacks. For example, in 2002 the release of the *World Economic and Social Survey* was delayed by several months, owing in part to additional internal review procedures. At ECA, in addition to difficulties in arranging external peer reviews, there are failures in coordination between units

responsible for the preparation of publications and the production unit. ECA management has launched a major effort to correct this problem.

28. In accordance with recommendation 8 (e), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions have explored several strategies to increase the sales of publications. For example, in addition to the usual promotional efforts at major conferences and book fairs, ECA, ECLAC and ESCWA have developed a web marketing strategy to highlight their publications. The sale of the ECE *Survey* is promoted at the Geneva International Book Fair, but advertising in the international media seems to have ceased. ESCAP is exploring the feasibility of entering into contracts with local publishers for selected publications. To improve the dissemination of its specialized documents, ECLAC has concluded agreements with leading publishing companies that cover a significant portion of the Latin American region. This has been especially effective in the production of extrabudgetary publications. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has not entered into any contracts with local publishers, but has used the United Nations University Press as an outlet to increase the dissemination of its analysis.

29. Several regional commissions advised the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the sales limitations identified in the 2000 evaluation by that Office still existed. For example, the sale prices of their publications, set at Headquarters, are too high for the markets in their regions. Attempts to use local publishers, which could publish at lower cost, have sometimes failed because of the time taken by Headquarters to arrive at a decision and the stringent conditions set for publication. The Department of Public Information, which coordinates these efforts, explained that tiered pricing to allow for lower prices in developing countries has been applied in selected markets. The policy of expanding distribution through local and regional publishers will be continued to the extent that it can be achieved without committing budgeted resources. It is hoped that the recent changes made to the United Nations Publications Board and its mandate will lead to greater cooperation with the regional working groups and improve the decision-making process.

30. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions are using several approaches to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of their dissemination of information, in accordance with recommendation 8 (f). Approaches range from the informal gathering of articles found in the press to the administration of formal readership surveys. In the experience of these programmes, both formal and informal approaches have provided useful information. Several regional commissions have diversified the methods they use for feedback. Such methods include soliciting the views of government representatives attending meetings, inserting survey forms in publications, and interacting with web site users. The programmes will need to examine the question of whether this diversification of methods is providing them with the more comprehensive feedback that has so far been missing.

31. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions have given adequate attention to key elements of recommendation 8. It is expected that the second phase of the United Nations reform will provide additional opportunities to pursue the full implementation of the recommendation (see para. 34 below).

D. Capacity of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

32. In addition to the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in the 2000 in-depth evaluation, endorsed by CPC, the Committee recommended that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs take measures to review its capacity to carry out in a better manner the analysis of socio-economic development trends.[5]

33. The Department decided that the recommended review would be undertaken in the light of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Both events took place in 2002, and eventually the review of the Department's capacity to carry out analytical work was subsumed under the broader assessment that led to the proposals for reform presented by the Secretary-General in his report "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change"[6] in September 2002. It is the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the Department should have proceeded sooner with the recommended review instead of waiting more than two years before undertaking it. If the review of the Department's capacity to carry out analytical work had been conducted earlier, the initial steps taken would have been followed by appropriate adjustments at the end of 2002.

34. The report of the Secretary-General states that the impact and relevance of what the United Nations does is critically reliant on the quality of its reports and stresses that "the value of the reports is dependent on the depth of research that underpins them, the clarity with which their content is communicated, and the timeliness of their production and delivery schedules."[7] This perspective was already the basis for the 2000 evaluation recommendations endorsed by CPC and is also the subject of the present triennial review. In this respect, the report of the Secretary-General is providing additional impetus for full implementation of the CPC recommendations.

35. In order to implement the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General and the related General Assembly resolution 57/300, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was reorganized in early 2003. The reorganization included, inter alia, the creation of:

(a) The Financing for Development Office, to provide support for the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development;

(b) The Development Policy and Planning Office, to formulate advice for development policy and the preparation of major cross-sectoral departmental reports, including the coordination of the preparation of the Department's major flagship publication;

(c) The Economic Assessment Unit, to analyse global economic trends, prospects and issues.

The Development Policy Analysis Division, which had been preparing the Department's economic flagship publication, was reorganized into these three new

[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 16* and corrigenda (A/55/16 and Corr.1 and 2), chap. II, sect. C, para. 244.

[6] A/57/387 and Corr.1.

[7] Ibid., para. 87.

entities. It is envisaged that the Development Policy and Planning Office will provide major substantive inputs for the preparation of the main cross-sectoral departmental reports and, relying on the collective competencies of the Department, will draw from the expertise that exists in various parts of the Department.

36. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs should assess, at the end of 2005, to what extent this new arrangement has enhanced the Department's capacity to carry out the analysis of socio-economic development trends, as recommended by CPC.

III. Conclusions and recommendation

37. **The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions have made concerted efforts to further improve the quality of their analysis of socio-economic development trends and ensure that it is reaching government officials and the interested public, as recommended by CPC. Improvements in the presentation of this analysis in the *World Economic and Social Survey* have somewhat facilitated its dissemination by the media.**

38. **The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions have applied more consistently effective publishing practices, such as improving the quality of the manuscripts and the timeliness of their publication, increasing the number of special briefings to government officials and the press, and making free distribution and sales strategies more effective.**

39. **Greater efforts should be made by the programmes concerned to ensure that their economic analyses serve as a source for understanding long-term trends. Such analyses would be important contributions to the international community towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.**

40. **In a few programmes, the interaction between analytical and technical cooperation activities has strengthened the content of the analysis of socio-economic trends. This practice has been insufficiently developed and, on the basis of past experience, requires more systematic integration of analytical work in existing technical cooperation activities.**

41. **The exchange of information and ideas among the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions takes place in different forums but would benefit from a more focused and institutionalized approach. For example, the exchange of ideas during the planning and preparation of the global and regional economic surveys does not follow any standard procedures, and continuity is not assured.**

42. **Concerned with the significant decrease in resources allocated to the global programme responsible for the analysis of socio-economic development trends, CPC recommended in 2000 that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs take measures to review its capacity to carry out such analysis in a better manner. The Department believed that it should await the outcomes of the International Conference on Financing for Development and of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, both in 2002, to decide on the most effective measures to take. After reviewing the outcomes of those important events, and taking into account General Assembly resolution 57/300 on the**

Secretary-General's proposals for further change, the Department proceeded with a reorganization of its structure in early 2003.

43. **As a result of that reorganization, the Department expects that its future analyses of socio-economic development trends will be strengthened through increased reliance on the collective competencies of the Department. The results of the 2003 reorganization should be reviewed at the end of 2005 to assess to what extent the new arrangement has indeed enhanced the Department's capacity to carry out its analytical work.**

Recommendation
Capacity of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to carry out the analysis of socio-economic development trends

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs should assess, at the end of 2005, to what extent the Department's 2003 reorganization has enhanced its capacity to carry out the analysis of socio-economic development trends, as recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The conclusions of this assessment should be reported by the Department in its programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005, in the framework of results and self-evaluation reporting.

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services